

Message Text

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SUBJ: PROSPECTS FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF GIBRALTAR TALKS

1. SUMMARY: THE GIBRALTAR GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS WITH SPAIN BUT IS UNCERTAIN WHAT IT CAN SAY TO THE SPANISH WHEN THEY DO MEET AGAIN. THE CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT FACES IS HOW TO SATISFY THE SPANISH THAT THERE IS SOME MOVEMENT FROM THE GIBRALTAR SIDE WITHOUT STIRRING UP A POLITICAL STORM AT HOME. IF THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS ARE SUCCESSFUL SOME FURTHER CONCESSIONS FROM THE SPANISH ARE EXPECTED, PERHAPS THE RESTORATION OF FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN GIBRALTAR AND ALGECIRAS. THE GIBRALTAR GOVERNMENT IS ENCOURAGED BY THE EFFORTS SPAIN IS TAKING TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND GIBRALTAR'S THINKING. A SETTLEMENT WITH SPAIN IS NEVERTHELESS CONSIDERED TO BE A LONG WAY OFF. A NEW POLITICAL PARTY IS BEING FORMED IN GIBRALTAR TO PROMOTE AN AUTONOMOUS GIBRALTAR UNDER SPANISH SOVEREIGNTY AND ONE OF THE PARTY'S FOUNDERS HAS TAKEN CONTROL OF A LOCAL NEWSPAPER TO ADVANCE THE PARTY'S OBJECTIVES. END SUMMARY

2. THREE MONTHS HAVE PAST SINCE THE STRASBOURG TALKS AND THE FEELING OF EXCITEMENT AND EXPETCTION THAT GRIPPED GIBRALTAR IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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WAKE OF THAT FIRST MEEING BETWEEN SPANIARDS AND GIBRALTARIANS HAS EVOLVED INTO A MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION. THE NOVEMBER TALKS WERE HISTORIC ONLY BECAUSE THEY BROUGHT THE TWO PARTIES TOGETHER. WHAT WAS SAID AMOUNTED TO NO MORE THAN A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION AS SEEN BY THE OPPOSING SIDES, A GENERAL AIRING OF EACH SIDE'S COMPLAINTS. THEY AGREED TO MEET AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE BUT THE PROBLEM NOW FACING GIBRALTAR IS WHAT

TO TALK ABOUT AT THE NEXT ROUND. THAT, AS LEAST, IS THE IMPRESSION I CARRIED AWAY FROM MY THREE DAY VISIT TO THE ROCK LAST WEEK.

3. UNLESS THERE IS SOME SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE FUTURE, THERE IS EVERY POSSIBILITY THAT THE TALKS WILL BREAK DOWN ALTOGETHER. THE GIBRALTAR GOVERNMENT CLEARLY DOES NOT WANT THIS TO HAPPEN AND IS NOW TRYING TO DECIDE HOW FAR IT CAN GO WHEN THE SECOND ROUND TAKES PLACE. THE GOVERNMENT IS IN A RATHER DIFFICULT POSITION SINCE THE PRO-BRITISH SENTIMENTS OF THE MAJORITY OF GIBRALTARIANS DO NOT PROVIDE A BASIS FOR FRUITFUL TALKS WITH SPAIN. IN TIME AND WITH HELP (CONCESSIONS) FROM SPAIN THEY COULD PROBABLY BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT SPANISH SOVEREIGNTY WITH SAFEGUARDS FOR THEIR SEPARATE IDENTITY BUT NOT NOW. THE CHALLENGE CHIEF MINISTER SIR JOSHUA HASSAN FACES IS HOW TO SATISFY THE SPANISH THAT THERE IS SOME MOVEMENT FROM HIS SIDE WITHOUT STIRRING UP A POLITICAL STORM AT HOME. THE SPANISH, HE SAID, ARE WILLING TO GIVE HIM THE TIME HE NEEDS AND HAVE NOT PUT ON ANY PRESSURE TO HOLD THE SECOND ROUND BEFORE HE IS READY.

4. THE SPANISH CONCESSION TOWARD GIBRALTAR SINCE STRASBOURG WAS THE RESTORATION OF THE TELEPHONE LINK. TURNED ON JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS, THE TELEPHONE SERVICE WILL CONTINUE, THE GIBRALTAR GOVERNMENT BELIEVES, AT LEAST UNTIL THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS. IF THOSE TALKS ARE SUCCESSFUL, SIR JOSHUA IS CONFIDENT THAT THE TELEPHONE LINK (WHICH HE CLAIMS HE WON FROM THE SPANISH AT STRASBOURG) WILL BE FOLLOWED BY SOME FURTHER CONCESSION. THE CONFIDENTIAL

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NEXT SPANISH CONCESSION COULD BE THE RESTORATION OF FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN ALGECIRAS AND GIBRALTAR. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THE RELAXATION OF SPANISH AIR RESTRICTIONS ON AIRCRAFT ENTERING AND DEPARTING GIBRALTAR'S AIRPORT. THE OPENING OF THE FRONTIER IS NOT CONSIDERED LIKELY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

5. EVEN MORE ENCOURAGING TO THE GIBRALTAR GOVERNMENT THAN THE TELEPHONE LINK IS THE INTEREST SPAIN HAS TAKEN SINCE STRASBOURG IN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND GIBRALTAR. SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES OF SPAIN'S POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE MADE VISITS TO GIBRALTAR, THE MOST NOTABLE BEING JAVIER RUPEREZ, SECRETARY GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE UCD WHO WAS AT THE STRASBOURG TALKS AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE. HE CAME, HE SAID, TO GAIN A GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND LEFT A VERY FAVORABLE IMPRESSION THE MANY GIBRALTAR LEADERS HE MET DURING HIS FOUR DAY VISIT. SPAIN HAS ALSO SENT A FULL TIME CORRESPONDENT TO GIBRALTAR WHOSE REPORTS, I GATHER, ARE MORE FOR FOREIGN OFFICE CONSUMPTION THAN FOR PUBLICATION.

6. IN THE 1976 GIBRALTAR HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS THREE INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES RAN UNSUCCESSFULLY ON PRO-SPANISH PLATFORMS. ALL THREE ADVOCATED THE RETURN OF GIBRALTAR TO SPAIN

WITH CONSIDERABLE AUTONOMY FOR THE INHABITANTS OF GIBRALTAR. TITO BENADY AND J. E. TRIAY WERE THE MOST SERIOUS OF THE THREE CANDIDATES AND NOT SURPRISINGLY HAVE NOW JOINED FORCES TO FORM A NEW PARTY. MR. BENADY TOLD ME THAT ITS FORMATION HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED BUT THAT ITS OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO PERSUADE THE PEOPLE OF GIBRALTAR THAT THEIR FUTURE LIES WITH SPAIN AND THAT THEY CAN JOIN SPAIN WITHOUT LOOSING THEIR INDEPENDENT RIGHTS AND IDENTITY. TO FURTHER THE PARTY'S OBJECTIVE MR. BENADY HAS JUST PURCHASED CONTROL OF THE CALPE NEWS, A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER WHICH PUBLISHES ARTICLES IN BOTH SPANISH AND ENGLISH.

7. WHILE MR. BENADY BELIEVES THE EVOLUTION OF GIBRALTAR INTO AN AUTONOMOUS REGION OF SPAIN CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN A FEW YEARS, MR. RUPEREZ, FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO GIBRALTAR, SPOKE OF A
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SETTLEMENT TAKING AS LONG AS 25 YEARS. THE GIBRALTAR LEADERS WITH WHOM I TALKED (I SAW THE GOVERNOR AND DEPUTY GOVERNOR AS WELL AS THE CHIEF MINISTER) ALL FELT THAT A SETTLEMENT WITH SPAIN IS INDEED A VERY LONG WAY OFF.

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